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ALTAR AND BALDACCHINO IN NEW CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL, ST. LOUIS

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BALDACCHINO AND ALTAR IN NEW CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL IN ST. LOUIS

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TOWN AND COUNTRY EMBELLISHMENT

ALTAR AND BALDACCHINO OF THE NEW CATHEDRAL AT ST. LOUIS

(See pages 261 and 262)

THE new Catholic Cathedral of St. Louis on Lindell Boulevard, designed in the Byzantine style by the architects Barnett, Haynes & Barnett of St. Louis, is certainly a grandiose construction with an interior full of beauty. We wish to congratulate the church authorities for having given their city a perpetual and inspiring feast for the eyes such as will command the veneration of the faithful and the admiration of all others who see it. We illustrate in this issue the altar and baldacchino which were carried out by the Gorham Company of New York—with what degree of success the public must judge.

This noble structure is built of some four hundred tons of the richest marbles and mosaics. The floor upon which the altar stands is the finest of its kind in the world. It is circular in form, thirty-six feet in diameter, and entirely of marble inlay. A very adaptable design is carried out by a judicious use of varicolored stones.

In the center of this floor stands the Altar, of light Sienna marble, richly carved and inlaid with colored stones and mosaics; these reach a climax of intensity and richness round the Tabernacle Door, which is of burnished gold inlaid with mother of pearl and lapis lazuli and encrusted with amethysts, topazes, crystals and other precious and semi-precious stones. At each side of the altar, a kneeling angel in white marble on a pedestal conveys the idea of perpetual adoration. In the front of the *retable* four panels contain decorative portraits of the four Latin fathers, Saints Ambrose, Gregory, Jerome and Augustine, executed in mosaic.

The Baldacchino or canopy over the altar, like those erected in some of the great medieval cathedrals of Europe, favored by the immensity of its proportions, is here carried out with equal grandeur. It towers sixty feet and is supported by fourteen monolithic columns. These are of Sienna, Verona, Breccia, Violetta and Alps-green marbles, quarried in that part of the earth where their respective varieties can be found and shipped to St. Louis in one piece. They are symbolically arranged. In

fact, each part of this structure has been designed with a scrupulous regard for the symbolism of its function and a more detailed scrutiny reveals an intricate and profuse exploitation of Christian iconography. For instance, the columns supporting the main structure have been fixed to ten in number, which is considered by most authorities as the Number of Perfection. The four remaining columns under the side wings, directly beneath the large statues of the four Evangelists, are symbolic of the four Gospels. In the capitals of these are carved the respective emblems of the four Evangelists. The superstructure, which changes in form or plan as it rises upward, being first square, then octagonal and finally round to receive the surmounting dome, is of Trani marble, the warm cream-gray tone of which blends beautifully with the marble and mosaic inserts, and the outer dome, which is entirely carried out in Venetian gold and colored mosaics.

Under the rood arch and back of the altar, forming a fitting background for it, looms a large ornamental bronze cross, upon which hangs a life-size figure of the Savior in white marble. The Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John complete this Calvary group, which is supported by a Sienna marble pedestal, decorated with mosaic ornament. The whole work has been most happily adapted to its position. It is of the Byzantine style of architecture, as also is the Cathedral itself, and upon closer observation may be found to echo many of the beautiful proportions of this edifice. The workmanship of both the mosaic and carving is of true Byzantine character, but avoids such crudities in drawing and workmanship as were incident to the limited abilities of the early Byzantine workmen. In distribution of color, refinement of proportions and general massing it can well be said to rival the great works on the European continent, and probably even realize the dream of the architect George Barnett, who adequately expressed his majestic conception when he exclaimed "I want this to be an Emperor's tribute to God!"

